



## Memorandum

**TO:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**FROM:** Stephen Haase  
Albert Balagso  
Jay Marcus

**SUBJECT: SPARTAN KEYES  
STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS  
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**DATE:** June 6, 2002

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COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff advises the Planning Commission to recommend that the City Council: (1) approve the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* as the City/community vision for the future of the Spartan Keyes area, (2) authorize the Administration to direct the City Departments and Agencies with implementation responsibilities to begin their respective activities, including the general oversight of the implementation of the *Plan* by the Redevelopment Agency and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, and (3) encourage the Spartan Keyes area property owners, residents and community members to dedicate their time, energy and resources to implement the recommendations of the *Plan* and continue their community building activities.

### **BACKGROUND**

**Spartan Keyes Planning Area.** The Spartan Keyes planning area is located approximately one mile southeast of Downtown San Jose. The area is generally bounded by Interstate 280 on the north, Coyote Creek and Senter Road in the east, Hollywood and Humbolt and Alma Streets on the south and South First Street to the west. The Happy Hollow Zoo portion of Kelley Park is located just east of the neighborhood, across Senter Road, and the former Story Road Landfill site and Coyote Creek occupy the eastern part of the *Plan* area. The southern portion of the *Plan* area contains Spartan Stadium and San Jose State University's sports fields and facilities.

The Spartan Keyes area neighborhood consists primarily of single-family homes. Architectural styles include classic Victorians from the turn of the century and post 1906 Craftsman-style bungalows. These residential building styles, particularly where combined with tree lined streets, give Spartan Keyes a traditional and generally attractive neighborhood character. New multifamily housing, that is relatively compatible in design with the historic character of the neighborhood, has been developed; however a number of unattractive 1960's era apartment

complexes concentrated near Keyes Street detract from the neighborhood aesthetic. Spartan Keyes' residential areas are defined by the Keyes Street commercial strip, an industrial corridor between South 3<sup>rd</sup> and South 5<sup>th</sup> Streets, and a series of very heavily traveled one and two-way north-south streets (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets). The neighborhood does not include a single neighborhood park, neighborhood school or community center, nor does it have any neighborhood-oriented commercial areas with dry cleaners, specialty food services, restaurants, etc.

The industrial corridor between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets was a center for food processing and canning in the Valley of Hearts Delight. While many of these early and mid-century industrial buildings have survived and remain in industrial use they tend to be used for fabrication, warehousing and distribution. In addition, several of these buildings now house studios or other arts uses and the San Jose State Art Department's Foundry is located on South 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

**East Gardner Specific Plan Area.** Nested within the *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* area is the East Gardner Specific Plan area. The boundaries of this specific plan area are generally Interstate 280 to the north, South 6<sup>th</sup> Street to the east, Humbolt and Hollywood Streets to the south and South First Street to the west. The planning process for the East Gardner Specific Planning area began concurrently with the development of the *Spartan Keyes Neighborhood Improvement Plan* and is expected to be completed by fall 2002. The East Gardner Specific Plan is a long range land use and infrastructure plan that will establish a vision for change in the East Gardner Plan area. At this stage the Specific Plan Advisory Committee is envisioning a new community with an emphasis on housing, family and arts-oriented facilities, and neighborhood-oriented recreation. When approved by the City Council, the Specific Plan will be incorporated into the City of San Jose's General Plan as City Policy. In contrast, the *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* recommends specific action items to be implemented. These actions are designed to enhance and preserve the existing positive character of the area. The *Improvement Plan* includes issues addressed in the Specific Plan such as traffic circulation, open space development, the development of an arts district and pedestrian improvements. Together, these two plans will guide development and implement the desired improvements and help realize the community's vision for Spartan Keyes.

**Plan Development Process.** The planning process for the Spartan Keyes Neighborhood Improvement Plan was begun in December 2000. A Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) consisting of community leaders and business and property owners was formed to guide the development of the *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan*. This same group also acted as the Specific Plan Advisory Committee for the development of the East Gardner Specific Plan. Both plan processes were addressed simultaneously at monthly NAC meetings. Over the next year, one public workshop and twelve NAC meetings were held covering neighborhood topics and issues which affected both plans. In January 2002, the SNI *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* and the East Gardner Specific Plan processes were separated to allow for more focused input on each. Over the course of the next four months, four more NAC meetings and two additional public workshops were held that focused solely on the *Improvement Plan*.

Bottomley Design, a planning consultant firm, facilitated NAC meetings and neighborhood workshops and worked with the community and City Staff on the development of the content of

the *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan*. The Office of Council District 3 and SNI staff from several City Departments also supported the *Plan* development process.

## **ANALYSIS**

**Purposes of the Plan.** The purposes of the *Spartan Keyes Neighborhood Improvement Plan* are to document the community's specific goals and objectives for improving the area, and to provide the City, Redevelopment Agency and various neighborhood stakeholders with a clear guide for revitalization of the neighborhood.

**Vision.** The *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* promotes a vision that unifies the disparate residential areas of Spartan Keyes into a safer, more livable, and truly unique neighborhood. Specific goals to achieve the vision are:

1. Calm traffic throughout the neighborhood and discourage cut-through traffic on local neighborhood streets as feasible.
2. Improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation within the neighborhood and to adjacent districts and nearby destinations.
3. Mitigate the parking effects from San Jose State University, Spartan Stadium, and related special events at adjacent recreational facilities.
4. Develop community parks to serve neighborhood residents.
5. Improve and maintain remnant open spaces.
6. Maintain and expand the community garden network.
7. Improve the appearance and physical condition of neighborhood streets.
8. Reduce noise levels produced by the adjacent freeway and on-street truck traffic.
9. Build on the existing traditional neighborhood character through improvements to residential properties.
10. Reduce anti-social activity within the neighborhood.
11. Improve conditions beneath and adjacent to freeways to increase safety and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
12. Reduce the number of homeless encampments under and along I-280, Keyes Street, and along the rail spur.
13. Encourage development of public facilities, such as an elementary school, arts facilities, and a community center, within walking distance for neighborhood residents.
14. Adjust land use policies to encourage neighborhood-oriented commercial development and infill residential development.

**Draft Plan.** Over the course of the planning process, community and Neighborhood Advisory Committee members discussed many actions and policies that could bring positive change to the area. The community and the NAC ultimately formulated an Action Plan consisting of 22 actions that reflect what needs to be accomplished to achieve their goals and objectives for their neighborhood.

- A. The "Top Ten" Priority Actions. The "Top Ten" Priority Actions represent the short list of priority actions that the community selected as having the greatest potential for positive impact. Preliminary priority actions were initially chosen by community members at workshops and then refined by the NAC into the "Top Ten." The "Top Ten" lists reflect the

NAC's weighing of current neighborhood issues, long-term neighborhood vision, and likely cost. The "Top Ten" action items below are ranked in order of importance:

1. Develop public open space at the Story Road Landfill
2. Prepare a neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan
3. Improve the Keyes Street streetscape
4. Revitalize and attract neighborhood friendly businesses along Keyes Street
5. Develop a neighborhood park in the East Gardner area
6. Develop arts-oriented uses in the East Gardner area
7. Mitigate neighborhood noise levels
8. Improve access to existing elementary schools
9. Explore opportunities for a new neighborhood elementary school
10. Improve Martha Street as a Pedestrian/Bicycle Corridor

B. Other Action Items. In addition to the above "Top Ten" Priority Actions, the Action Plan includes 12 other actions established by the community as key to improving the Spartan Keyes area. The twelve additional action items are organized below under the five issue categories established in the *Plan*.

1. Neighborhood Circulation and Parking.
  - Improve condition of streets and sidewalks through repair and ongoing maintenance.
  - Mitigate overflow parking generated from events at Spartan Stadium.
2. Neighborhood Parks and Open Space.
  - Maintain and improve the appearance of publicly owned open spaces in the area.
  - Develop a trail along Coyote Creek.
3. Neighborhood Conditions and Maintenance.
  - Improve neighborhood streetscapes by improving street lighting, planting street trees and enhancing pedestrian crossings at identified locations.
  - Improve neighborhood code enforcement.
4. Neighborhood Security.
  - Increase Police Presence in the neighborhood, and develop a neighborhood watch program.
  - Improve safety at freeway underpasses by improving lighting, enhancing pedestrian crossings, restricting access to Caltrans land at underpasses, and increasing the frequency of homeless sweeps.
5. Neighborhood Development.
  - Discourage industrial businesses in existing and planned residential and commercial areas.
  - Establish neighborhood design guidelines for new development and for the renovation and reuse of industrial and historic buildings.
  - Encourage and explore opportunities for neighborhood-accessible public facilities such as additional parks, a library and a community center.

- Develop the former Southern Pacific property south of the *Plan* area compatible with the overall vision outlined in both the *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* and the East Gardner Specific Plan.

**Issues of particular note.**

***Develop public open space at the Story Road Landfill:*** The community and the Neighborhood Advisory Committee identified as their top priority the development of the western and central portion of the Story Road Landfill into a public park containing both active recreation such as ball fields and passive recreation such as seating areas and walking trails. A number of other City Departments have identified potential uses for portions of the Story Road Landfill. The City of San Jose will need to decide if and to what extent the Story Road Landfill should be made available for the development of park uses.

***Revitalize and Attract Neighborhood-friendly Businesses along Keyes Street:*** To achieve this “Top Ten” priority, this *Plan* recommends that the City consider amending the General Plan to designate the length of Keyes Street from 1<sup>st</sup> Street to Senter Road as Neighborhood Commercial. The *Plan* also recommends that this commercial designation should be extended to properties located behind extremely shallow frontage properties, to allow lot consolidation for “frontage” projects along Keyes Street. Rezoning of these properties would then be encouraged in conjunction with projects which front on Keyes and would require a greater depth to accommodate neighborhood serving commercial uses. Many of these properties required to expand the depth of commercial sites are residential, often single family residential. Even though the Spartan Keyes community, through the SNI process, has solidly supported the concept of expanding appropriate commercial sites, immediately affected residents might well be concerned when specific General Plan amendments or projects might be construed to encroach onto their blocks. Planning staff will need to work closely with the Neighborhood Advisory Committee and adjacent residents to identify where the expansion of commercial uses is and is not appropriate and to further refine the boundaries of the recommended General Plan land use amendment.

***Displacement of Industrial Businesses by Planned Residential and/or Commercial uses:***

Although not an issue identified in the *Plan*, this action leads to a significant issue that will need to be addressed as the both the *Spartan Keyes Improvement Plan* and the East Gardner Specific Plan begin to be implemented. These plans, as well as other SNI plans, recommend the relocation of industrial uses from historically industrial sites to other areas of the City. A challenge that became evident during the development of the specific plan is identifying appropriate and feasible locations where these auto oriented, industrial, fabrication and distribution uses can relocate. Significant industrial land has been converted to residential and other uses in recent years and with other SNI plans also recommending the relocation of industrial uses, there will be a substantial demand for relocation sites. The City may need to consider conducting a study to determine how to help preserve and retain these industrial uses and to help facilitate relocation to appropriate locations as necessary.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The *Plan* was developed in close coordination with residents and property and business owners of the Spartan Keyes area through more than one year of monthly NAC meetings and three community workshops. All property owners, residents, and business owners within the Spartan Keyes area were invited to the community workshops through postcard mailers, flyers, phone calls, and PRNS and PBCE contacts. Community members actively participated in each phase of the planning process.

## **COORDINATION**

The preparation of the *Plan* was coordinated with the Council Office, the City Manager's Office, and various Departments and Agencies, including the Departments of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement; Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services; Transportation; Public Works; and Police as well as the San Jose Redevelopment Agency.

## **CEQA**

An addendum was prepared to the San Jose 2020 General Plan Environmental Impact Report which was previously certified on August 16, 1994 by the City Council (Resolution Number 65459).

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